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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

OUR DEFECTIVE WAR MACHINE

SIR,—Latterly no one has had to say, with the member of Congress who was reproached for not standing by the President, "I would gladly stand by him if I could only find out where he stands." True, during four years, we were all taught to be pacifists, but the nation is no longer "too proud to fight" and "peace without victory" is to-day unthinkable. I leave it to others to explain this remarkable transition, but I pray God that the first tuition did not make us a nation of slackers, if not of cowards! In every cantonment there are men who refuse to fight, to drill, or even to wear the uniform; and the departments of the Capital are filled to overflowing with young officers and civilian clerks between 21 and 31. The Y. M. C. A. workers, including the President's son-in-law, are nearly all of draft age. He who doubts this assertion—let him go and see for himself! In the much-investigated Ordnance Department, there are over 4,000 employees where there were 90 before the war. This is a fact, however incredible it may seem. And all other offices are similarly overcrowded with young and inexperienced men. Anything rather than shoulder a rifle and fight! Why are not retired officers and women substituted for them?

This condition, and the multiplicity of councils and boards—advisory, defensive and what not—these are the true causes of the slow progress of the War Department. In the Navy Department these conditions do not obtain to the same degree; hence less fault is found. Moreover, the Navy and Marine Corps have been increased by only 100,000 men—the Army by 1,000,000.

But why should a successful broker upon the floor of the Stock Exchange be made a member of the Council of National Defense? Or a College President be placed in charge of the fuel distribution? Why should a pronounced pacifist, a clever young lawyer of Cleveland, be Secretary of War, *in time of war*? And why should another pacifist, a third-rate editor of a third-rate paper of a third-rate town of a third-rate State, be Secretary of the Navy?

In times of peace, this playing of politics or rewarding of one's personal friends, would make little difference; but in the face of a national crisis, it seems little less than criminal. When the existence of a state of war was declared last April, there were two officers so pre-eminently qualified for Secretary of War and for Secretary of the Navy, that it is difficult to comprehend how they could have been overlooked. General Goethals, after the administrative and executive ability displayed in the construction of the Panama Canal, was thought to be the inevitable choice

for the first position; and Admiral Fiske, inventor and naval expert, upon whose shoulders the mantle of the lamented Mahan seemed to have fallen, for the second. We should have a different tale to tell, had this been done. Instead, Goethals was hitched to a Pacific Coast politician, a lawyer and counsellor for the lumber league of that region, with whom he refused to pull in harness. Admiral Capps succeeded Goethals and Admiral Harris succeeded Admiral Capps. Both Admirals have resigned, and up to date the Shipping Board, from which so much was expected, has been a disaster. Whose fault? Nine months of war have passed and little or nothing tangible has been accomplished.

What have we really got to show for our enormous expenditures of nearly twenty billions of dollars? Hot air, certainly; plenty of it! Indeed, we appear to be trying to spend, if not to waste, as quickly as possible. The "cost plus 10%" system is an outrageous swindle. The more the contractor can spend or waste, the more he will receive. Very fine! Go to one of our camps and see how it works. Is it, after all, a big bluff, as the Germans say? Does the Administration hope to frighten them into surrender by our huge but slow preparation? If not, why this extreme and prolonged deliberateness? Who is responsible?

General Goethals is coming into his own, perhaps, as Quartermaster General, but would have made a better Chief of Staff. So would General Wood, another good soldier. If, as Napoleon said, armies crawled on their bellies to-day, General Bliss, the present incumbent, would do better as a Commissary of Subsistence, the Corps of his predilection. Admiral Fiske appears to be permanently shelved. Meanwhile, the chief exploits of the Secretary of the Navy have been the puerile prohibition in the service of the use of prophylactics against venereal diseases, of erotic tattooing, or of the enlistment of sailors having amatory figures ("September Morns") indelibly marked upon their skin (a favorite device of "Old Salts") and of the acceptance of donations from the Navy League for sailors or of the entrance of the members thereof to Navy Yards. Truly an enviable record!

I have no desire or intention to assail the President, whose many admirable qualities I was among the first to recognize and praise, but whose fatal disposition to make mediocre appointments I deplore. Unless the nation is completely hypnotized, something *must* be done quickly or *we* shall lose the war by inaction. Let us visualize present conditions:

President Wilson:	V E R S U S	Emperor William:
<i>College Professor and President; original Pacifist.</i>		<i>Lifelong Sailor and Soldier and Ruler.</i>
Secretary Baker:		General von Hindenburg:
<i>Lawyer and Pacifist.</i>		<i>Lifelong Soldier.</i>
Secretary Daniels:	S	Admiral von Tirpitz:
<i>Editor and Pacifist.</i>		<i>Lifelong Sailor and Soldier.</i>

REMEMBER: these are the men who respectively direct opposing war policies! We *shall* win—we *must* win; but at what sacrifice of lives and treasure, perhaps—even with the assistance of Colonel House of Texas!

CHARLES SMITH.

NEW YORK CITY.